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BOROUGH OF OKEHAMPTON

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

FOR THE

YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER, 1955

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MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

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Year ended 31st December, 1955

PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF

Medical Officer of Health
E. D. ALLEN-PRICE, M.D., D.P.H.

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Mr. Mayor, Aldermen, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I beg to submit my annual report for the year ending 31st December, 1955, in accordance with the instructions of the Ministry of Health.

The general health of the Borough was again exceptionally good throughout the year and dangerous infectious diseases were non-existent.

There was a slight decline in the population of the Borough during the year.

The vital statistics, set out in the following tables, compare very favourably with those for England and Wales.

SECTION 'A'

General Statistics

Area (statute acres)	786
Population—1931 Census	3,519
Population—1951 Census	3,897
Estimated Home Population—mid-1955...	3,840
Number of Inhabited Houses	1,198
Rateable Value	£27,358
Product of Penny Rate	£106
Loan Debt	£126,062

Vital Statistics

	Male	*Female*	*Total*
Live Births	29	28	57
Legitimate	28	25	
Illegitimate	1	3	

		England and Wales
Crude Birth Rate per 1,000 population ...	14.8	15.0
Corrected Birth Rate	15.8	
Still Births	Nil	
Still Birth Rate per 1,000 live and still births ...	—	23.1

	Male	*Female*	*Total*
Deaths	22	25	47

		England and Wales
Crude Death Rate per 1,000 population ...	12.2	11.7
Corrected Death Rate	9.4	
Deaths from Maternal Causes	Nil	
Maternal Mortality	—	0.64
Deaths of Infants under 1 year	1	
Infant Mortality	17.5	24.9

Year	*Population*	*Birth Rate*	*Death Rate*
1946	3,925	24.5	13.2
1947	3,952	23.0	15.5
1948	4,090	16.9	15.4
1949	4,020	15.4	16.4
1950	4,040	16.3	14.1
1951	3,929	12.7	15.3
1952	3,879	12.4	12.6
1953	3,840	12.0	29.2
1954	3,860	11.4	12.2
1955	3,840	14.8	12.2

The chief causes of death were as follows:—

Infectious Causes:	
Influenza	1
General Causes:	
Heart Disease	13
Cancer	10
Arteriosclerosis	5
Bronchitis	5
Cerebral vascular disease	2
Disease of the prostate	2
Nephritis	2
Coronary disease	1
Accidental	2
Other causes	3
Infants under 1 year:	
Prematurity	1
TOTAL ...	47

Age of Death Table

Age at Death:	*Male*	*Female*
Infants under 1 year	1	–
1– 5 years	–	–
5–15 ,, ...	–	–
15–25 ,, ...	–	–
25–35 ,, ...	–	–
35–45 ,, ...	1	–
45–55 ,, ...	2	–
55–65 ,, ...	5	–
65–75 ,, ...	6	11
75 and over	7	14
TOTALS	22	25

SECTION 'B'

General Provision of Health Services

There was no change in the general provision of health services during the year and they continued to work smoothly.

Maternity Accommodation—Considerable staffing difficulties were experienced at the War Memorial Hospital which have now been largely overcome, and the unit continues to serve a very useful purpose for the town and district.

National Assistance Act, 1948—There were no cases under section 47 of this Act during the year.

SECTION 'C'

Sanitary Circumstances of the Area

Mr. Brunskill has submitted the following report on the sanitary circumstances of the Borough for the year:—

Water Supply

Sources: Sources of supply are from watersheds in the interland of Dartmoor feeding two intakes. One is at Newbridge on the Black-a-ven

stream, and the older and smaller at Yes Tor on the Red-a-ven stream. Supplies at the intakes have been quite adequate throughout the year.

Rainfall: Rainfall records are taken at two points on the watershed and at the Filter Station. Returns are sent monthly to the Air Ministry Meteorological Office. Readings are taken monthly at Cranmere and Newbridge and daily at the Filter Station.

	1955	1954	1953	1952	1951
Cranmere ...	64.74	99.52	65.65	77.65	92.18
Newbridge ...	55.61	83.30	54.08	72.60	79.00
Filter Station	49.05	61.83	41.48	58.24	65.00
Dry Days (no rain)	189	131	187	152	128

The rainfall on the watershed was much below the average of 80.31″.

The driest months were August, April and March, and the wettest December, January, November and February, in those orders. There were long dry spells in November (20 days), April (14 days) and July (13 days). On seven days there was more than 1″ fall.

Intake Mains: Intake mains in the Artillery danger zones have again escaped serious damage and functioned properly throughout the year. The Black-a-ven intake main was opened up at Moor Brook for examination. Break pressure valves were overhauled, and old supply pipes cleared and land drained on the abandoned works on the Okehampton Park Estate.

Filtration and Treatment: The plant has been in continuous operation throughout the year. Minor intermittent faults were remedied by the attendant in daily attendance. The sludge beds were cleared and overhauled. Two further filters Nos. 3 and 4 were opened up and all sand was removed and cleaned. New sand was provided for replacements and interior fittings were overhauled and repaired. This overhaul was carried out by Council staff and all four filters have now been treated in this way. Filters are generally washed daily by high pressure air scour and kept up to a high operational standard which is essential owing to the intake of peaty solids.

The treated water is clear, soft, colourless and of excellent taste. Analyses indicate it to be of a satisfactory standard of purity both bacteriologically and chemically. Ten samples were taken for bacteriological analysis, and all passed M.H.L.G. Class 1 Standard. pH values have been generally maintained at 7.0 Heavy rainfall caused discolouration of rain water for short periods during the year and necessitated temporary additional filtration treatment.

Distribution: Zonal distribution, which gives a stabilised pressure in the central low-level area and maintains pressure in the outer high-level zones, has now been in continuous operation for 18 years without interruption except for repairs.

Mains were regularly flushed and leak inspections continuously carried out. Leaks were found and repaired on twenty-six Corporation service pipes, three Corporation mains which were completely fractured, and on thirteen consumer services. Considerable maintenance work in clearing service pipes, mainly by force pump, was again carried out, twenty-four services being treated in this way. Valve repairs were carried out in Station Road, Victoria Street, and Northfield Road.

The pressure gauge control box at Parklands has proved most useful in maintenance of proper pressure on the H.L. mains. Minor repairs were carried out at the Station Road Pressure Reducing Valve.

Consumers have extended the supply pipes to agricultural holdings well into the Rural District.

There was again hard frost in February, but again it had little significant effect on the distribution system.

New services and supply pipes are mainly being laid in copper tube, and stopcocks are fixed direct on the mains to obviate cutting off main supplies during repairs. New services have been provided for seven new properties

and one existing property in addition to the new houses and flats at Savile Mead. At Castle Cottages a new length of 3″ asbestos pressure pipe main was laid between the fourth and fifth blocks to replace the defective old cast iron main and further work is to be carried out. An additional 3″ sluice valve has been fixed at the junction of North Street and Northfield Road. On the Savile Mead Housing Estate new mains were laid to cover the new houses on Savile Mead Extension and provision was made for connection to sixteen new houses and flats on a circulating main on both sides of the new road.

Drainage and Sewerage

Sewers and sewage disposal works have continued to operate satisfactorily with no serious defects. Trade effluent from the Gas Works has continued with little nuisance. Since the provision of additional storm overflows on the main sewer at North Street and North Road, there has been no further flooding of any kind. Essential repairs were carried out on the sewer and retaining walls at West Bridge. Further repairs were carried out to the distribution pipes and screening tanks at the disposal works. At the request of the farmer the concrete sludge drying bays were extended to provide additional storage capacity and easier loading facilities.

Additional labour was again provided for the farmer for clearing and spreading sludge. The irrigation channels were partially cleared. Effluent standards have been well maintained and no complaints as to river pollution have been received.

Further samples of the river water from the Ockment River were taken by the Devon River Board at and below the disposal works, and these show a very clean river and that the effluent discharge has had no significant effect on the water.

Rivers and Streams

The East and West Ockment rivers are self cleansing and very clean. Solid rubbish is periodically removed. Intermittent pollution from Laundries was being dealt with at the end of the year.

Swimming Pool

The swimming pool and paddling pool, both of which are supplied by continuous running water, have been well maintained and conducted. In addition the pools are cleaned periodically during the season and lightly chlorinated.

Sanitary Inspection of the Area

The following visits were carried out by your Inspector during the year:

Houses	56
Houses *re* housing	37
Drainage	19
Water closets	15
Sewerage	38
Water supply	67
Rivers	22
Refuse disposal	14
Bakehouses	14
Refuse and disposal tip	22
Tents and vans	2
Schools	2
Rodents	3
Animals	5
Food and meat shops	115
Offensive trades	4

Public Cleansing, Refuse Collection and Disposal

Refuse collection and disposal have been carried out weekly with collections throughout the year. A driver and two men collect the refuse satisfactorily on Thursdays and Fridays each week with an additional trade collection on Mondays. The Commer Refuse Collector and General Service Truck has now been in continuous use for nine years and the Council have ordered a new Karrier Bantam 7 cu. yd. Refuse Collector with detachable cover which is due for delivery in the first half of 1956.

Street cleansing is carried out over some areas at the same time as refuse collection. Normal street cleansing is by orderly truck, and streets are also cleansed daily including Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings.

Disposal by regulated tipping has been satisfactory. Rodent control is carried out by the Council's own operator. The tip is regularly treated and sprayed daily or three times a week as necessary with tip dressing for the control of flies. This has been most effective, even in dry hot weather, in keeping the tip free of flies. Considerable quantities of trade refuse are also dumped on the tip. Levelling of the tip to improve its shape is continually carried out, and further accumulated scrap metal has been buried in.

Salvage

Collection and disposal of salvage has been discontinued.

Rodent Control

In accordance with Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries' requirements, rodent control has continued in operation throughout the year with a part-time operator. Block control has been carried out where necessary throughout the area, again to a progressively lessening extent. The incidence of infestation in the area has continued to decline. Sewer treatment again showed little infestation.

Infectious Diseases and Disinfection

No cases of infectious diseases had to be dealt with for the seventh year in succession.

Disinfestation treatment has not been necessary.

Smoke Abatement

Four minor cases of smoke emission were dealt with by informal action.

Fish Frying

There are one small fish frying shop and one larger fish frying shop and cafe. Both have been well conducted and formal action was unnecessary.

Offensive Trades

At the two establishments seven inspections were made. No action has been necessary.

Factories Acts, 1937 and 1948

Factories and workshops have been kept in good condition. The tables on page 8 give details of inspections and defects found.

SECTION 'D'

Housing

Housing Repairs: Individual defective houses were inspected and eight were rendered fit by informal notice.

Housing Management, Maintenance and Repairs: Normal maintenance

1. Inspections

Premises (i)	Number on Register (ii)	Number of Inspections (iii)	Number of Written Notices (iv)	Number of Occupiers Prosecuted (v)
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities ...	30	53	4	—
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the local Authority ...	14	14	—	—
(iii) Other premises in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority	8	10	—	—
Total	52	77	4	—

2. Cases in which Defects were Found

Particulars (i)	Number of cases in which defects were found: Found (ii)	Remedied (iii)	Referred To H.M. Inspector (iv)	Referred By H.M. Inspector (v)	Number of cases in which prosecutions were instituted (vi)
Want of Cleanliness ...	1	1	–	–	–
Overcrowding	–	–	–	–	–
Unreasonable Temperature	–	–	–	–	–
Inadequate Ventilation	–	–	–	–	–
Ineffective drainage of floors ...	–	–	–	–	–
Sanitary Conveniences: (a) Insufficient	1	1	–	–	–
(b) Unsuitable or defective	3	3	–	1	–
(c) Not separate for sexes ...	–	–	–	–	–
Other offences	–	–	–	–	–
Total ...	5	5	–	1	–

repairs have again been of a minor character and in small numbers during the year on the pre-war houses at North Road, post-war houses at Savile Mead Estate, temporary bungalows and requisitioned properties. All repairs, except electrical, are carried out by the Council's own maintenance staff. Properties are thoroughly cleansed, repaired and re-decorated on each change of tenancy.

New construction: Further new development on the Savile Mead Housing Estate was carried out during the year. Erection of ten houses in two blocks of four and one pair; four flats in one block; and two police houses, were put in hand by three Contractors at Simmons Way Extension. Four flats were completed in September, and the remaining houses were in progress at the end of the year. The two police houses are being built by the Council for the Devon County Standing Joint Committee.

All the houses and flats are being built in accordance with plans prepared by the Borough Architect and under his supervision. The flats are of the two bedroom type as already built on the site. The houses are of a modified type containing dining-kitchen, parlour, and two double and one single bedroom, and usual offices. The floor area of these 3-bedroom houses is the same as for the former 2-bedroom houses.

The erection of the new Aged People's Home on the same Estate by the Devon County Council was approaching completion at the end of the year.

Tenders were also invited for the construction of footways and fencing on the Savile Mead Estate.

When the Savile Mead Estate is complete there will be 56 houses and 16 flats, a total of 72 family units, in addition to the Aged People's Home.

Three private houses were in progress at the beginning of the year, six were completed during the year, and four were in course of erection at the end of the year. The number of private houses built during the year was approximately the same as the average for the pre-war years.

SECTION 'E'

Inspection and Supervision of Food

Milk

Samples of milk during 1955 have again been taken of both designated and non-designated milk as follows:—

Grade	*Total Samples Taken*	*Passed*	*Failed*
Non-designated ...	29	17	12
Tuberculin tested ...	31	23	8
TOTALS ...	60	40	20

Of all samples taken from 17 producers, 3 had no failures, and similarly from 9 retailers, none had no failures during the year.

Seventy-two inspections of cowsheds, dairies and milk shops were made and informal notices were given. The standard of cleanliness has continued good and in some cases very good.

Ice Cream

Samples of ice cream for bacteriological examinations were taken during the year with the following results:—

Grade 1	*Grade* 11	*Grade* 111	*Grade* 1V	*Total Samples Taken*
11	5	2	2	20

Samples were taken from 11 different retailers and 7 had no failures.

Bakehouses, Meat and Food Shops

These premises have all been well maintained. Minor improvements have been carried out in a number of them. Inspections were made and informal notices were given in four instances. In a number of shops a very high standard of hygiene is maintained.

New Bye-laws made under section 15 of the Food and Drugs Act, 1938, for the proper handling of food sold for human consumption, have been in operation since February, 1952.

The number of food premises in the area are as follows:—

Grocers	14
Greengrocers	9
Confectioners	4
Bread and Cakes	5
Meat shops	6
Fish shops	2
Milk shops	2
Dairies	4
Hotels and Bars	8
Cafes	7

Other foodstuffs

Foods have been examined and 55 condemnation certificates have been issued. There were again many canned foods which deteriorated owing to defective containers. The total weight of food condemned was 3 cwts. Condemned food is destroyed at the Council's refuse disposal tip.

Slaughterhouses

In accordance with the Ministry's instructions and requirements of the Food and Drugs Acts, only one slaughterhouse has been regularly used. This has been well maintained.

An arrangement has been made with the Rural District Council for their Meat Inspector to operate in the Borough, and this is proving completely satisfactory.

Details of the number of animals killed and inspected, and the carcases, parts or organs condemned, are set out in the table on page 11.

Samples taken under Section 3, Food and Drugs Act, 1938

The following samples were taken by the County Inspector during the year:—

Christmas Pudding Pork Sausages (2 samples) Fish Cakes (2 samples) Linseed Compound Ground Almonds Condensed Milk Butter Marzipan Evaporated Milk Gin Whiskey Milk (10 samples)	*All Genuine*

Food Poisoning

No case of food poisoning occurred during the year.

Carcases and Offal Inspected and Condemned, in Whole or in Part

	Cattle excluding Cows	*Cows*	*Calves*	*Sheep and Lambs*	*Pigs*	*Horses*
Number killed (if known) ...	165	24	6	448	275	–
Number inspected	165	24	6	448	275	–
All diseases except tuberculosis and Cysticerci:— Whole carcases condemned ...	–	–	–	8	–	–
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned ...	96	13	1	42	16	–
Percentage of the number inspected affected with disease other than tuberculosis and cysticerci ...	58.18%	54.16%	16.67%	11.16%	5.81%	–
Tuberculosis only: Whole carcases condemned ...	–	1	–	–	–	–
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned ...	28	7	–	–	21	–
Percentage of the number inspected affected with tuberculosis ...	16.96%	33.33%	–	–	7.63%	–
Cysticercosis:— Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned ...	–	–	–	–	–	–
Carcases submitted to treatment by refrigeration ...	–	–	–	–	–	–
Generalised and totally condemned ...	–	–	–	–	–	–

Prevalence of, and Control over, Infectious Disease

No epidemic of infectious disease occurred within the Borough during the year.

The following cases of infectious disease were notified by the doctors:—

Age	*Measles*		*Whooping Cough*		*Meningococcal Infection*	
	M	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*
Under 1 year ...	—	1	—	—	—	—
1–2 years ...	—	—	—	—	—	—
3–4 years ...	—	2	—	—	—	—
5–9 years ...	1	1	2	—	—	—
10–14 years ...	—	—	—	—	1	—
15–24 years ...	—	—	—	—	—	—
25 and over ...	—	—	—	—	—	—
Age unknown ...	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS ...	1	4	2	—	1	—

The following cases were notified by the schools:—

School	*Mumps*	*Chicken Pox*	*Ringworm*	*German Measles*
Okehampton County Primary ...	6	—	1	2
Okehampton Grammar...	—	2	—	—
TOTALS ...	6	2	1	2

Diphtheria: No case occurred during the year and immunisation against the disease continued.

Poliomyelitis: No case of this disease was notified during the year.

Tuberculosis: One new case of Pulmonary Tuberculosis was notified during the year. No deaths were recorded from this cause.

At the end of the year 25 cases of tuberculosis remained on the register as follows:—

Pulmonary		*Non-Pulmonary*	
Males	11	Males	1
Females	12	Females	1

In conclusion I would thank the Mayor and Corporation for the ready hearing my proposals always receive, and the sanitary staff and others who have materially assisted in the preparation of this report.

I am, Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Your obedient Servant,

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE,

Medical Officer of Health.